

## Q&amp;A

# Sheila Bridges talks real home design

A slender, shapely vase of violet hydrangeas, a votive candle and a white cup with a gold rim say everything about the necessary ingredients for making a home. That is to keep it simple, uncomplicated and beautiful.



Sheila Bridges

This could be designer Sheila Bridges' mantra. It certainly is a theme in her new book, "Furnishing Forward: A Practical Guide to Furnishing for a Lifetime" (Bullfinch Press, \$40). In her very personal book, Bridges shows how a home can change through life's stages.

Tribune staff reporter Pamela Sherrod talked with this sought-after designer who was chosen as "America's Best Interior Designer of 2002" by Time magazine and included on House Beautiful's list of America's Most Brilliant Decorators. Her namesake New York design firm has worked with a clientele that includes former President Bill Clinton (designing his Harlem office); rap entrepreneur Sean Combs; Norton Utilities chairman Peter Norton; and author Tom Clancy.

**Q**How much planning should go into the rooms we live in?

**A**There's the practical consideration about design and its function. But basically you should surround yourself with the things that you love. [That] doesn't mean the things have to be expensive. People get into trouble when they confuse the two—making choices that don't reflect who they are and giving in to how much they can spend.

**Q**Your book's cover photograph seems to be as much about what you don't see as what you do. Why was this photo chosen to represent your book?

**A**I really had to fight for that photo to be on the cover. Most design books have a room [setting] and that room says something very specific about the kind of people it will attract—either contemporary or traditional.

I didn't want to alienate anyone with an image that said contemporary or traditional. A mix of styles are represented in the book. I wanted to show something that we can all aspire to—simple beauty that lasts a lifetime.

This book is as much for the person with a studio as it is for a person with a large home and who has a second home.

**Q**Are hydrangeas your favorite flowers? They have a colorful presence in the book.

**A**Yes, they really are my favorite. This is what creating a home is about—choosing things that you love and that make you feel good. For me, it's hydrangeas.

**Q**What do you want people to get most out of this book?



Photos by Anna Williams from "Furnishing Forward"

**"You should surround yourself with the things that you love," says Sheila Bridges, whose living room includes handcrafted furniture.**

**A**Ideas. The well-designed home really should be the home you look forward to coming home to—from the way it looks to the way it makes you feel. Make sure your favorite flowers, colors and fabrics are in your home—all the things that make you feel good. Mix the old with the new, like the vintage portrait of an unknown woman whose image means something to you to the new chair you've had your eye on. The things in your home should say something about you and where you are in your life. Your home should be able to grow and change just as you do.